

Nobody Gives a Damn about the Constitution Anymore

In our self-serving, myopic society, the ultimate authority that groups of like-minded political ideologues turn to when trying to make a point is the Constitution. Citizens of the United States protect, almost to a fault, the few rights they care for in order to best serve their own beliefs; but at the same time, they ignore or seek to trample rights that are important to others. In reality, of course, nobody really gives a damn about the Constitution: they really only want to look out for number one.

I'll begin with conservatives. Conservative ideologues have recently adopted the liberal stance on free speech, whereas before they opposed certain forms and modes of speaking; this is because, largely, conservative ideologues have had *their* speech repressed for a long enough time that it only makes sense for them to again raise the standard of the lionized First Amendment. Conservatives also support the Second Amendment: the right to keep and bear arms. Most of them do so in a sensible manner, stopping at the point of arming the citizenry with grenade launchers, and I respect their stance immensely. It is in keeping with the mythical, historical ideals of the United States that an armed citizenry is much more secure against a totalitarian takeover or hostile invasion than one in which rocks, sticks, and steak-knives are the only protection.

There is a problem, however (and when isn't there?). Many of these same patriots who speak so passionately about preserving the constitutional right of the citizen to speak as he must and protect himself, if necessary, with lethal force also support the suppression of certain rights in order to prevent terrorism. So long as their home or person is not the one in question, they fully support the violation of the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Amendments:

AMENDMENT IV: The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

AMENDMENT V: No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

AMENDMENT VI: In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defense.

They fully support the “sneak and peek” rights granted to the FBI and other law enforcement agencies by the Patriot Act, so long as those in question, whose library records can be seized, homes searched, and can be held without trial indefinitely are “terrorists” (read: Muslims). In other words, so long as their own rights are not violated, they could care less about those of other citizens.

While they now claim to support the First Amendment, the conservatives have apparently forgotten the final clause contained therein, that abridgement of “the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances,” is expressly forbidden. Case in point: the Republican National Convention of 2004, held in New York City. During the convention, several thousand protesters gathered peacefully nearby and planned on marching by Madison Square Garden, wherein thousands of rich solipsists were gathered to nominate John Wayne for president.

The protesters, while “assembled peaceably,” walking quietly in a line, carrying signs containing grievances they wished the Government to redress, were descended upon and arrested. Belongings were confiscated and hundreds were charged with “disturbing the peace,” because they “had no permit” for their protest. They must appear in court, possibly pay a fine or be jailed for ninety days, because they had no permit for something that the Constitution states they need none. What is the conservative defense of this? Almost to an individual, the conservative response is, “In times like these, some rights just have to take a back seat to protecting freedom.”

What they mean, of course, is that the rights of others must be suppressed because those others disagree with the powers that be. They don’t mean that some rights have to take a back seat; they mean that *other people’s rights* have to take a back seat. If the government decided that, in order to prevent possible terrorism, all firearms not in the hands of law enforcement or the military would be outlawed, on the remote chance that some terrorist, somewhere, will decide to open fire on a crowded street or concert hall, these people would be up in arms (pun *definitely* intended), bitching about the abridgement of their Constitutional freedoms.

It is precisely this “us or them” mentality that drives politics that has led some conservative lawyers to disenfranchise as many possible Democratic voters as possible. The phenomenon is limited to conservatives, at least in every news report I’ve seen, most likely because liberals, in their sickening sappy coddling of every person they find, would never think to perform such a sneaky, underhanded, fascist (but clever) act. The way this trick works, the attorney examines the voting rolls for his precinct, searches public records for any reason he can find, and then petitions a judge to remove that person’s name from the rolls. In their view, an extended vacation lasting from July into October is an indication of relocation outside the voting precinct.

Having spent my ire against conservatives, I’ll turn now to the liberals. Liberals have traditionally presented themselves as supporting the rights of all, even those with whom they happen to disagree. There has never been a greater whitewash of the truth. The conservative oppression of the First Amendment is light when compared to the liberal usurpation of speech. Above, I mentioned the Republican National Convention of 2004 and the subsequent arrests. This event, one involving a national gathering of “important people,” was splashed all over the news. Every day, however, in cities across America, there are liberal attempts at suppressing the

gatherings of conservative groups: NRA conventions, “protection of marriage” meetings, the WTO riots in Seattle, and countless Ku Klux Klan marches are interrupted. I do not say that I support the Klan, however, the hypocrisy in claiming to support the First Amendment rights of all citizens while qualifying the speech with “not THEM!” is – while not quite as absurd as a white supremacist – quite asinine in itself. Why not simply say what you mean (and by this I include conservatives as well as liberals), “I fully support your idea to speak *in theory* so long as it does not interfere with my own limited worldview?”

Liberals are the first to oppose the Second Amendment. They will tell you that assault-style weapons were never meant for the home, that you cannot hunt with a semi-automatic pistol, and that nobody really *needs* a gun anymore. They do not realize that *hunting* is not the reason that the pistol, the rifle, and various other weapons are purchased. At the same time, they do not realize the purpose of the Second Amendment. Both are intended for protection; and whether that protection is against home invasion, or against the inception of a possible police state, the Second Amendment is a necessary article in the Bill of Rights. There is a reason for each amendment in that Bill of Rights: they are almost sacred cows, untouchable, because if one could be repealed, then others could follow.

The slow takeover of the political system by the judiciary was initiated by liberals, who fought in the courts against any law they deemed repressive of individual rights. Most civil rights laws are upheld by judicial decree, and sexual harassment was only made illegal through the courts at first. Liberals resorted to this measure precisely because, at the time, they were the ideological minority in government; and any opposition to judicial ruling by conservatives was pointed to as evidence of conservative evil (a tautological, falsely logical statement if ever there was one).

In the early 1990’s, however, the liberals found themselves, for the first time in years, as a majority. Conservatives adopted liberal tactics, taking to the courts to reverse decisions and laws against their beliefs. In their unreasoning hatred of Bill Clinton, their fury at a baby-boomer taking the helm of the government, they tried, through the judicial system, to undo the election of a lawfully elected and sworn President of the United States. The fact that their case was based on their labeling as a high crime a married man lying about an affair with a young woman from the office aside, liberals now proceeded to complain about conservatives trying to impose their ideology through judicial, rather than legislative means.

I have a feeling that this trend will continue in the future, that our system has become so corrupt, so competitively “us or them,” that smear tactics and political buffoonery will only get worse, and never improve.